



City of Freeport

EMERGENCY SPECIAL COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

March 17, 2020, 9:00 AM

Freeport City Hall

112 Hwy 20 West

Freeport, Florida 32439

Council Members Present: Mayor Russ Barley, Councilwoman Amanda Green, Councilwoman Elizabeth Brannon, Councilman Eddie Farris, Councilman William "Boots" McCormick, Councilwoman Elizabeth Haffner

Staff Members Present: City Attorney Clay Adkinson, Parks Director Charlie Simmons, Planning Director Latilda Neel, Interim City Clerk Lori Cox

1. Meeting Called to Order

The meeting was called to order at 9:02 a.m. by Mayor Russ Barley in the Conference Room of Freeport City Hall.

2. Emergency Special Meeting & Agenda

The first order of business was to approve the meeting and the agenda.

Moved by: Councilwoman Brannon

Seconded by: Councilwoman Green

Motion: To approve the Emergency Special Meeting of the Freeport City Council and the Agenda as presented.

Ayes (5): Councilwoman Green, Councilwoman Brannon, Councilman Farris, Councilman McCormick, and Councilwoman Haffner

Carried (5 to 0)

3. Declare a Local Emergency

City Attorney Adkinson explained that the Mayor's action to declare a local emergency would allow the City of Freeport access to FEMA funding and to pursue any emergency actions that the State of Florida declares. Adkinson requested the Council to ratify the State of Emergency as presented in Resolution 2020-04.

Moved by: Councilwoman Brannon

Seconded by: Councilman McCormick

Motion: Approval to ratify Mayor Barley declaring a State of Emergency; Resolution 2020-04.

Ayes (5): Councilwoman Green, Councilwoman Brannon, Councilman Farris, Councilman McCormick, and Councilwoman Haffner

Carried (5 to 0)

4. Suspend Out of County Travel

Adkinson addressed restriction of out of county travel to personnel for Council consideration. The action would be consistent with Walton County, State of Florida and the Federal Government's actions taken.

Moved by: Councilwoman Haffner

Seconded by: Councilwoman Green

Motion: Approval to suspend all personnel travel outside Walton County unless permitted by the Mayor.

Ayes (5): Councilwoman Green, Councilwoman Brannon, Councilman Farris, Councilman McCormick, and Councilwoman Haffner

Carried (5 to 0)

5. Suspend Outdoor Permits

Adkinson presented suspending outdoor permits consistent and local county authority, state and federal government actions taken to discourage large public gatherings on public property for Council to consider. Private events and building permits would not fall under this consideration.

Moved by: Councilwoman Green

Seconded by: Councilwoman Haffner

Motion: Approval to suspend events requiring a permit by the City of Freeport and activities, on public property until declared otherwise.

Ayes (5): Councilwoman Green, Councilwoman Brannon, Councilman Farris, Councilman McCormick, and Councilwoman Haffner

Carried (5 to 0)

6. Suspend Rental of All City Facilities

Adkinson presented suspension of all city facilities for Council consideration. Facilities mentioned were the Blount House, Old City Hall and the Sports Complex.

Moved by: Councilwoman Green

Seconded by: Councilwoman Haffner

Motion: Approval to suspend rental of all city facilities until declared otherwise.

Ayes (5): Councilwoman Green, Councilwoman Brannon, Councilman Farris, Councilman McCormick, and Councilwoman Haffner

Carried (5 to 0)

7. Suspend Volunteer Boards & Committee Meetings

Adkinson presented suspending volunteer boards and committee meetings for Council consideration. The Recreation, City Facilities, and Planning Boards were specifically identified under this consideration.

Planning Director Latilda Neel noted there was one action that needed to come before the Planning Board on April 1st, but the meeting could be rescheduled to the day of the regular council meeting, April 14, 2020.

Moved by: Councilman McCormick

Seconded by: Councilwoman Haffner

Motion: Approval to suspend all volunteer boards and committee meetings until the next regular council meeting on April 14, 2020.

Ayes (5): Councilwoman Green, Councilwoman Brannon, Councilman Farris, Councilman McCormick, and Councilwoman Haffner

Carried (5 to 0)

8. Suspend City Council Meetings

Adkinson presented suspending City Council meetings for Council consideration. He noted that the Board of County Commissioners did not choose to suspend meetings at this time, City of Destin had suspended City Council meetings presently, and the City of DeFuniak had chosen to suspend one meeting.

The March 26, 2020 agenda was reviewed by Council and staff to determine what items needed to be addressed prior to the April 14, 2020 meeting.

- Interim City Clerk Lori Cox mentioned that Water Supervisor Larry Tuggle needed to purchase a truck to replace the Water Department truck that was totaled in an earlier accident.

- Finance Officer Bowers informed the Council that she gave Tuggle a quote of \$28,000 from the Sheriff's contract and suggested he contact Triangle Chevrolet Buick in DeFuniak to see if they could match the price or go lower.
- Adkinson stated that if the Council decided to cancel the March 26th meeting, the purchase of the truck would fall under related matters and authority could be given to the Mayor to execute the necessary documents not to exceed the Sheriff's contract amount.
- Adkinson stated that the re-use agreement listed under Engineering on the March 26th agenda is not an agreement, but rather is a Memorandum of Understanding to renegotiate the existing agreement in the future. Agreement details would not be available until the new sewer treatment is complete. He did not believe bringing the matter back at the April 14th meeting would be an issue.

Moved by: Councilwoman Brannon

Seconded by: Councilwoman Haffner

Motion: Approval to cancel all City Council Meetings until the April 14th Council Meeting and to allow the Mayor authority to execute a contract to purchase a truck for the Water Department, not to exceed the Sheriff's contract amount.

Ayes (5): Councilwoman Green, Councilwoman Brannon, Councilman Farris, Councilman McCormick, and Councilwoman Haffner

Carried (5 to 0)

9. Related Matters

- Adkinson informed the Council that at the current time, there are no telephonic meetings, Skype or other electronic means approved to reduce restrictions on public meetings but he is currently monitoring the situation at the state level and he would inform Council of any updates.
- Parks Director Charlie Simmons requested Council direction on the parks. Simmons felt that the parks should remain open during daylight hours but added temporarily locking the bathroom doors and disconnecting the water coolers/fountains would provide a level of protection for staff.
 - Council and staff discussed options of temporarily closing the park and playground due to concerns of the COVID-19 virus adhering to surfaces. Consensus was that the outside temperature was hot enough that the virus could not survive on surfaces according to health officials. Council and staff also felt people should be able to be outside as much as possible.
 - Council and staff agreed that limiting the parks hours of operation, closing the bathrooms and water access facilities were good first step measures to take but would leave further discretion to the Mayor and Simmons.

- Planning Director Neel informed Council that in an effort to provide a level of protection to the Planning department, she now will encourage people to submit applications via email, use the drop box out front of the building, and in lieu of in-house meetings she will have conference calls and conduct business as usual. Neel would also encourage her staff to work from home to care family members if necessary.
 - Adkinson noted that the Mayor can authorize work from home situations and the matter could be brought back to Council for further discussion if needed.
 - Council agreed that employees should stay home if they are sick and if they think they may be infected, it is recommended to use the Teledoc service that has been provided with the city insurance as a first step. Council was concerned for employees and agreed to be flexible during this period.
- Council and staff discussed closures within the surrounding area and the financial impact it will have on people, particularly to pay their bills. Discussion evolved to customer water disconnects for the month. Consensus was to wait until billing disconnect reports were available and address it at the April 16th meeting if necessary.
- City Attorney Adkinson and Councilwoman Green noted the shortage of blood in the Northwest Florida. They encouraged people, especially O negative blood types, to give blood during this critical period.
- Councilman McCormick volunteered to pick up groceries for the elderly in the area.

Moved by: Councilwoman Green

Seconded by: Councilwoman Brannon

Motion: To approve closing the bathroom and water facilities at the parks and grant discretion to the Mayor to consult with Parks Director Simmons to adjust hours of operation and limit parks activities, up to including closure, in accordance with all state or federal recommendations.

Ayes (5): Councilwoman Green, Councilwoman Brannon, Councilman Farris, Councilman McCormick, and Councilwoman Haffner

Carried (5 to 0)

10. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned by Mayor Barley at 10:09 a.m.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dan Barley", written over a horizontal line.

Mayor

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Roni Cox", written over a horizontal line.

Interim City Clerk

